

Amendments to the Claims:

1-13 (Cancelled)

14. (New) A method of accounting for postage charges in respect of batches of mail items, said method including steps of:

storing an accumulated aggregate value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items;

storing an accumulated pending value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items of any uncompleted batches of mail items; and

in response to completion of one batch of mail items, decrementing the accumulated pending value by a value of postage relating to the one completed batch of mail items.

15. (New) A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the step of storing the accumulated pending value includes the step of:

storing an accumulated pending value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items of the one uncompleted batch of mail items and postage charges to further mail items of at least one further uncompleted batch of mail items.

16. (New) A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the accumulated aggregate value comprises postage dispensed on mail items of the one completed batch of mail items and postage dispensed on mail items of at least one further uncompleted batch of mail items.

17. (New) A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the accumulated aggregate value consists only of the postage dispensed in respect of mail items of completed batches of mail items.

18. (New) A method as claimed in claim 17, including the step of:
incrementing the accumulated aggregate value by the value of postage relating to the one batch of mail items in response to completion of the same.

19. (New) A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the value of postage relating to the one completed batch of mail items is the postage dispensed in respect of the one completed batch of mail items.

20. (New) A method as claimed in claim 14, further including the steps of:
receiving a message from a mail handling authority in respect of the one completed batch of mail items; and
decrementing the accumulated pending value by a value of postage relating to the one completed batch of mail items.

21. (New) A method as claimed in claim 20, wherein the message includes an indication of an amount of postage charge determined by the mail handling authority to be due on the one completed batch of mail items, and the value of postage relating to the one completed batch of mail items is the amount of postage charge indicated in the message.

22. (New) A method as claimed in claim 14, including the step of:
utilizing the accumulated aggregate value and the accumulated pending value to

determine a payment due in respect of postage charges.

23. (New) Apparatus for accounting for postage charges in respect of batches of mail items, including:

a first memory storing an accumulated aggregate value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items;

a second memory storing an accumulated pending value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items of at least one uncompleted batch of mail items; and

accounting means operable in response to completion of one batch of mail items to decrement the accumulated pending value by a value of postage relating to the one completed batch of mail items.

24. (New) Apparatus as claimed in claim 23, wherein the first memory stores an accumulated aggregate value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items of completed batches of mail items and postage charges to mail items of the one uncompleted batch of mail items.

25. (New) Apparatus as claimed in claim 23, wherein the first memory stores an accumulated aggregate value of postage dispensed in applying postage charges to mail items to completed batches of mail items.

26. (New) Apparatus as claimed in claim 25, wherein the accounting means is operable in response to completion of the one batch of mail items to increment the first memory by the value of postage dispensed in respect of the one completed batch of mail items.